



RailNation: San Antonio

October 3-5, 2025



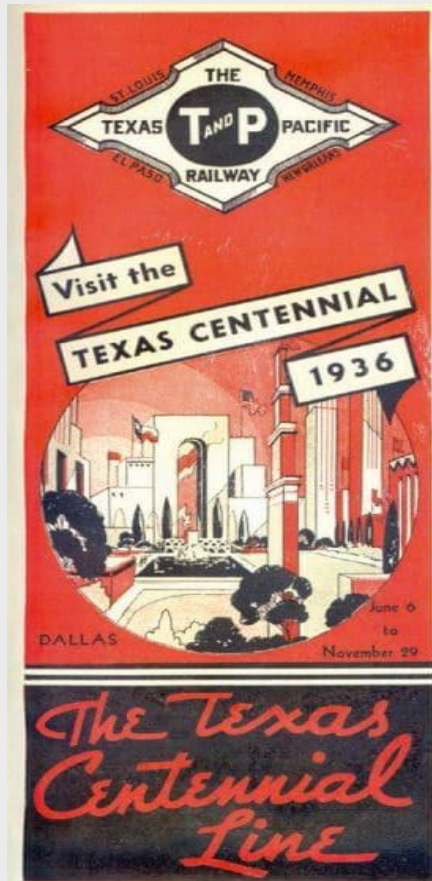
October 4, 2025

Outline



- 1** | History of Passenger Rail in Texas
- 2** | Trends and Challenges
- 3** | Past Efforts on Passenger Rail in Texas
- 4** | Current Efforts on Passenger Rail in Texas
- 5** | Overview of Texas Statewide Transit Plan
- 6** | TxDOT's Role in Passenger Rail

Texas Passenger Rail History



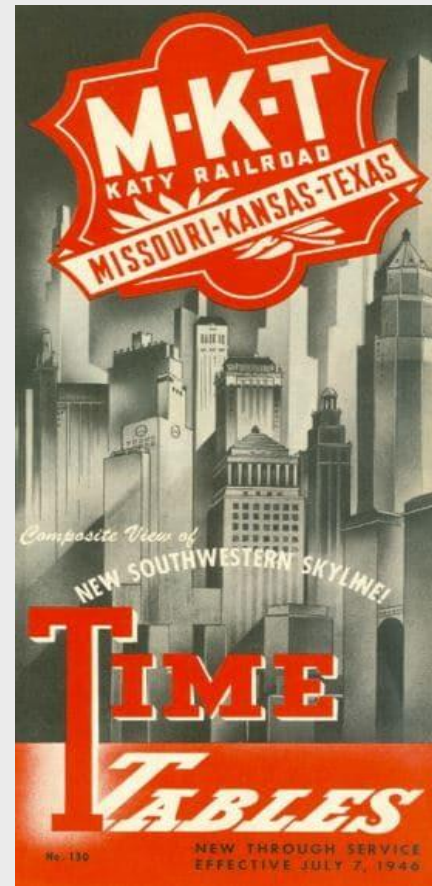
The Route to Texas!



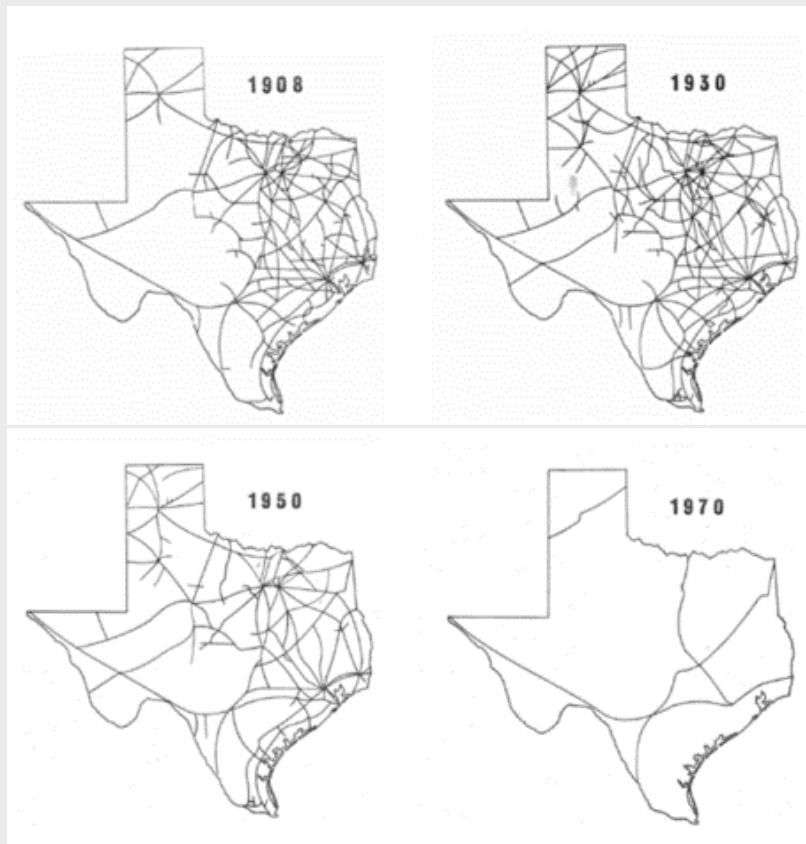
**HOUSTON
AND
TEXAS CENTRAL
RAILWAY.**

FORMS PART OF THE
MOST FAVORABLE ALL RAIL LINE
From all Points in the
NORTH AND EAST,
VIA EITHER
Chicago and Hannibal
Or ST. LOUIS,
AND OF THE
Only Direct all Rail Line
From all Points in the
WEST and NORTH-WEST
TO TEXAS

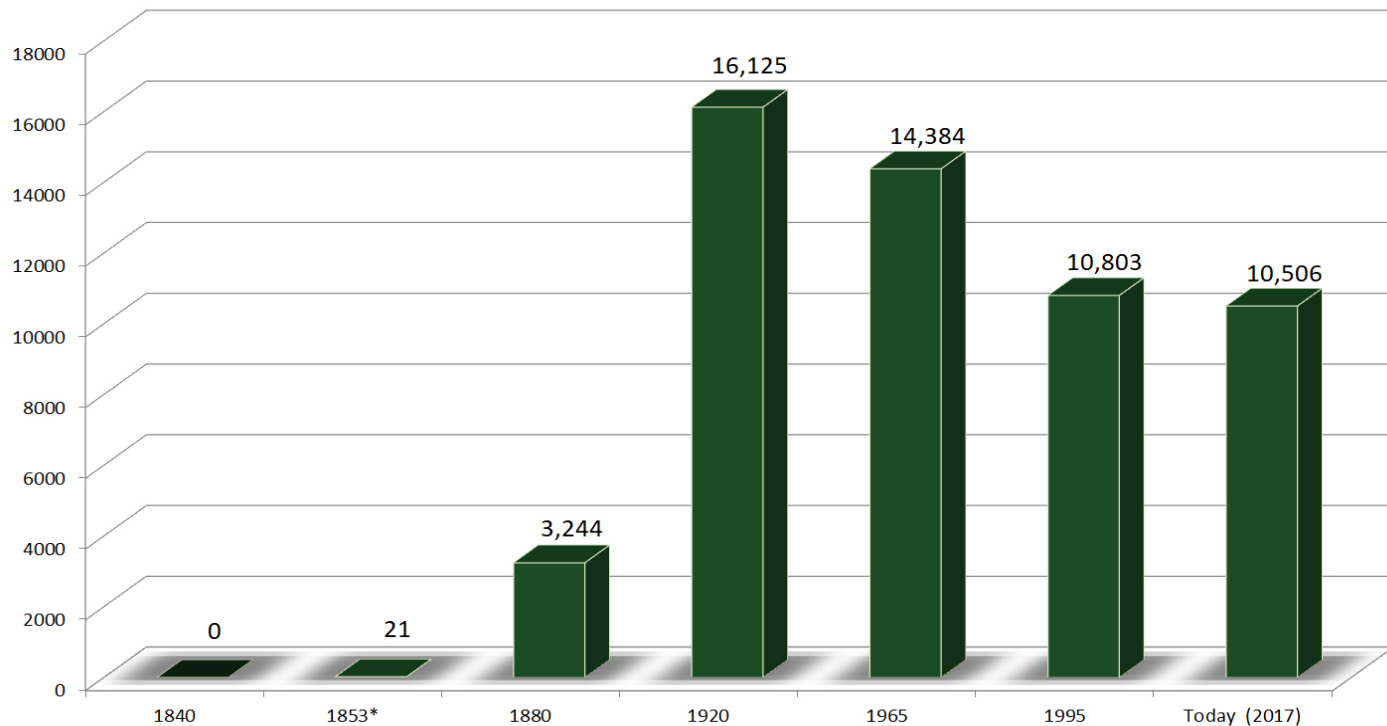
J. DURAND, Gen'l Sup't, Houston, Texas.
J. WALDO, Gen'l Ticket Agent.



History of Texas Passenger Rail



Texas Railroad Mileage

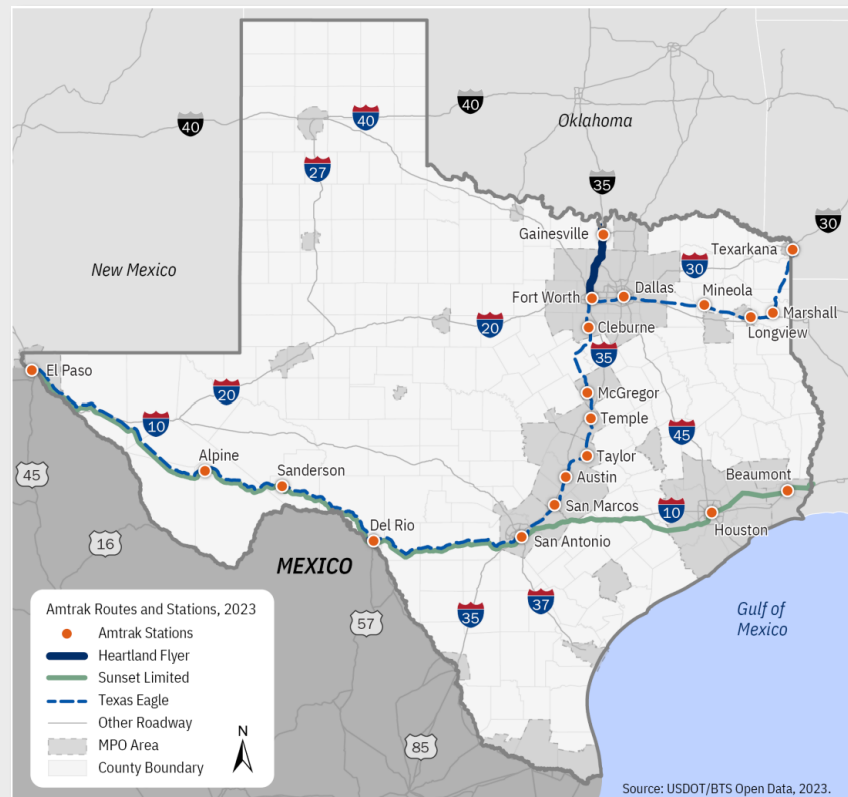


1840-Present

Sources: Stover, John. *Routledge Historical Atlas of the American Railroads, The*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
 Lamb, Parker J. "Great Railroad: State-By-State (Texas)." *Trains Magazine*. January 2007. Page 81. Print.
 "Freight Railroads In Texas." Association Of American Railroads. January 2019,
<https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AAR-Texas-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

Passenger Rail in Texas Today

- 3 Amtrak routes
 - **Heartland Flyer** – daily service between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City
 - **Sunset Limited** – connecting between California and Louisiana
 - **Texas Eagle** – connecting between Chicago and San Antonio (on to California)
- 19 Amtrak stations
- Additional connections provided by Amtrak Thruway Bus service

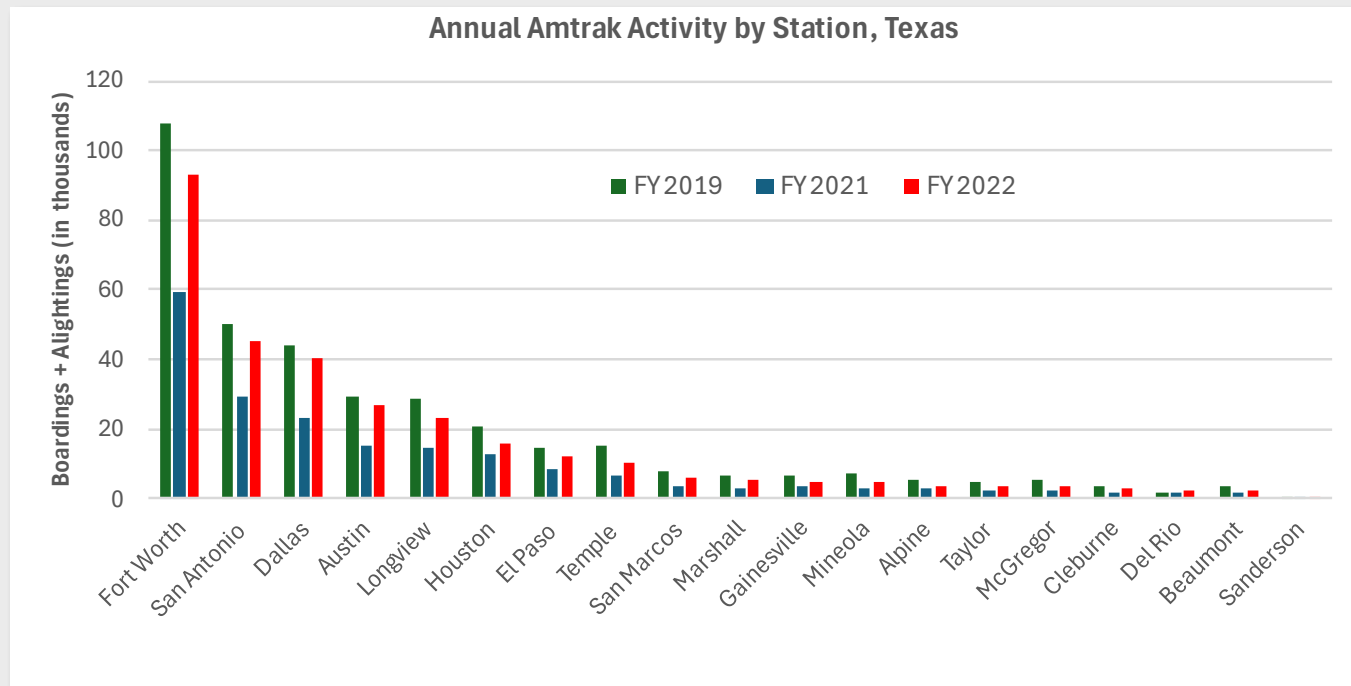


Texas Passenger Rail Connectivity to National Network



Passenger Rail Ridership in Texas - 2019-2022

- In FY 2022, statewide ridership was 306,300
 - Fort Worth had the highest ridership 93,212
- Between FY 2015 and FY 2019, the statewide average ridership was 376,206



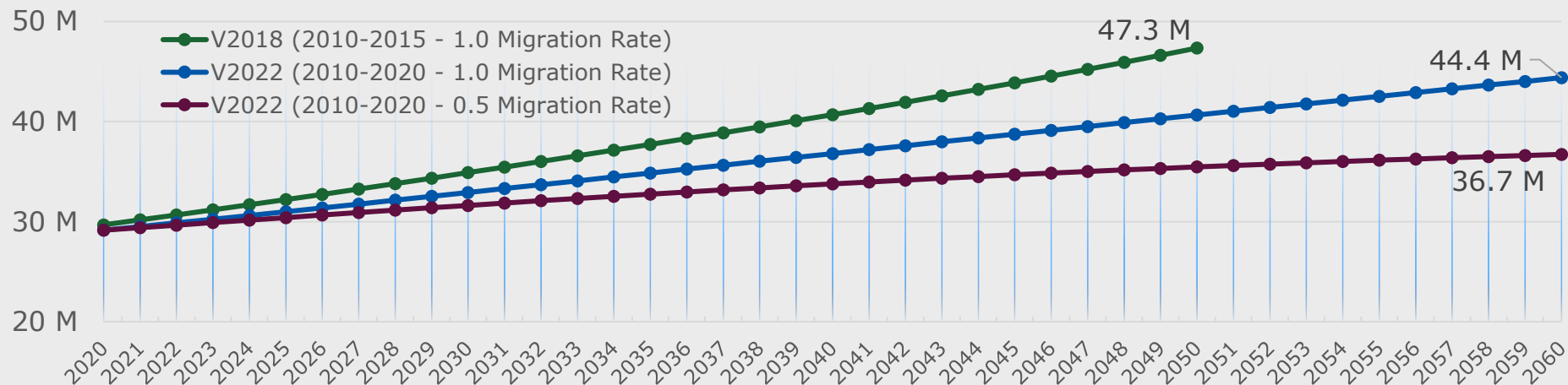
SOURCE: www.bts.gov (Amtrak Ridership)

Passenger Rail Trends in Texas

- Amtrak ridership declined 22% from FY 2017 to FY 2022
 - Gradually recovering from the pandemic
- Need for increased rail capacity and upgrades to rail crossings for enhanced reliability, on-time performance and safety
 - Competing for capacity with growing freight rail
- Future population growth calls for expanded transportation options
 - Especially in Texas Triangle and Gulf Coast region
- Lack of frequency and reliability of passenger rail service



Challenges: Texas' Population is Projected to Grow: 2020-2060



Census Information

25.1 M
2010



29.1 M
2020
16%
increase

Projections - V2022 (2010-2020 - 1.0 Migration Rate)

29.1 M
2020



36.8 M
2040
26%
increase

36.8 M
2040



44.4 M
2060
21%
increase

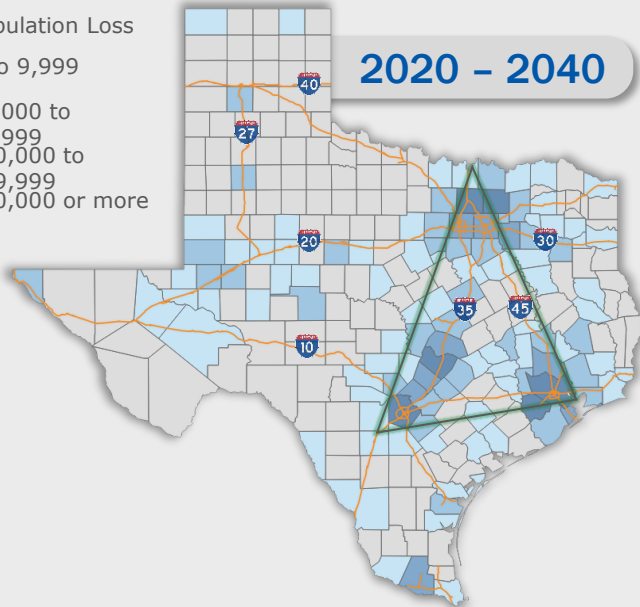
Challenges: Texas Population Projection (2020 – 2060)



Population is Projected to Grow in and Around Urban Areas

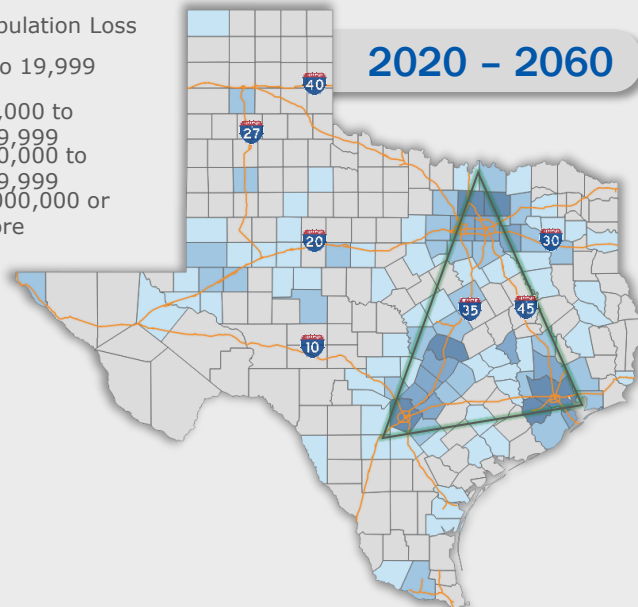
- Population Loss
- 1 to 9,999
- 10,000 to 99,999
- 100,000 to 499,999
- 500,000 or more

2020 – 2040

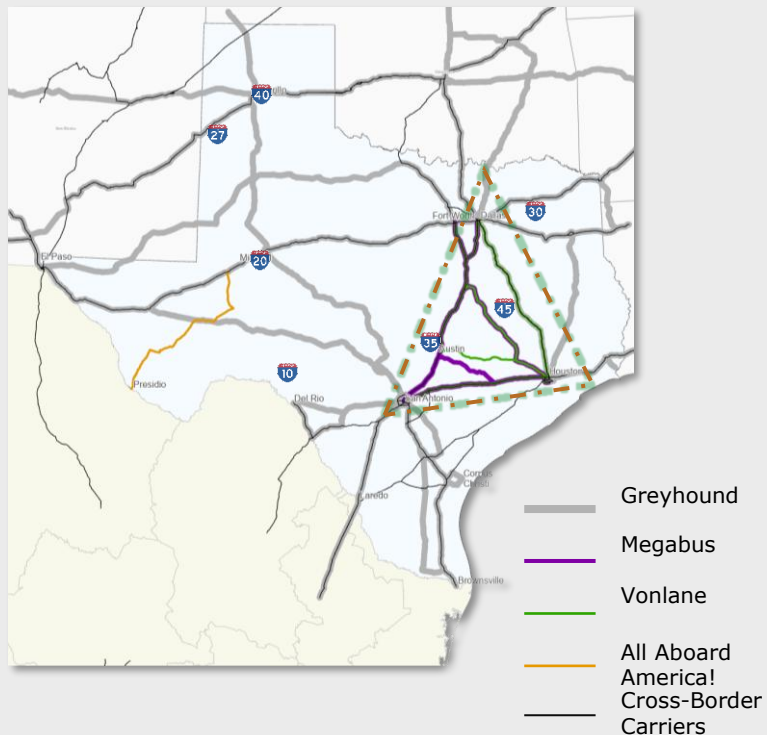


- Population Loss
- 1 to 19,999
- 20,000 to 199,999
- 200,000 to 999,999
- 1,000,000 or more

2020 – 2060



Challenges: Limited Intercity and Regional Transit Connectivity



Texas Triangle Megaregion

- 66 of Texas' 254 counties
- ~ 75% of Texas' population in 2022
- ~ 91% of Texas' population growth (2010–2020)

Limited Intercity Bus and Rail Coverage

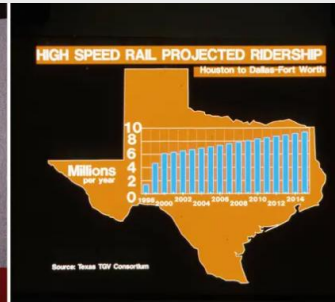
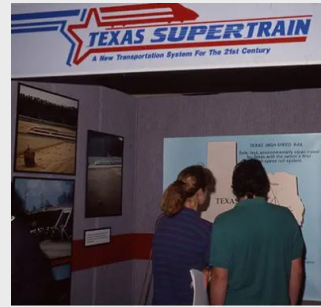
- Service frequency, travel times, and costs are potential barriers
- Limited service to pick-up and drop-off areas ("first mile/last mile") presents challenge
- No direct Dallas Fort Worth-Houston Amtrak connection

Source:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20110930134227/http://soa.utexas.edu/files/csd/ReinventingTexasTriangle.pdf>
U.S. Census

Challenges Raised in Recent Stakeholder Meetings

- Funding availability
- Railroad coordination with freight
- NEPA process
- Mitigating potential property owner impacts
- Houston-Dallas-Fort Worth would be a “big bite”
 - Corridor length, ROW, and project cost
- San Antonio-Austin might be a good first step
 - High number of trips in a shorter corridor
 - “Higher-speed” rail (vs. “high-speed rail”) could be competitive with driving
 - Cheaper to build
 - Lack of frequency and reliability of passenger rail service for short- and medium-haul trips.

Past Efforts on Passenger Rail in Texas



Current Passenger Rail Efforts in Texas

March 2024



Scan to visit our website!
or search "SMTP TXDOT"



Schedule

2023

- Project Kickoff
- Fall Outreach and Public Survey

2024

- Working Group Meetings
- Spring Outreach and Public Awareness Campaign
- Fall Outreach and Public Awareness Campaign
- Presentation to Texas Transportation Commission

2025

- Develop Implementation Plan

Project Next Steps in 2024

This year, we'll engage transit experts, transit operators, and business leaders in working groups centered around 6 emphasis areas: growth and urbanization, transit markets, technology advancement, service development, transit finance, and making the case for transit.

We'll also focus on continued public engagement about the SMTP through a spring public awareness campaign.

Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan

Texans depend on transit to take them farther. In 2022 alone, Texans traveled more than 4 million miles each day using public transit. As our state's population and economy continue to grow, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is working on a Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan (SMTP) so transit can keep Texas thriving.

TxDOT initiated the SMTP in summer 2023 to help the department and its partners plan for the movement of people in a comprehensive, coordinated, multimodal transportation system.

Plan Vision

The vision for the plan is to identify actions necessary to increase mobility and connectivity, support economic development, and address congestion through 2050. The plan will be inclusive of all current and emerging forms of transit, supporting technologies, and intersections with other modes.

Activities to Date

The SMTP is rooted in gathering information about how Texans use transit, where opportunities and gaps lie, and what value transit brings to Texans and the Texas economy. To better understand these factors, TxDOT has completed the following research activities:

- Report on existing travel and population conditions
- Ongoing analysis of gaps and opportunities
- Review of current transit funding, financing, and policy in Texas
- Ongoing evaluation of the value of transit

Public & Stakeholder Engagement

To understand Texans' needs, we're working to hear from people who use transit, people who don't use transit, business leaders, and transit workers and operators.

Engagement Highlights:

- 2,198 public survey responses
- 617 in-person interactions at 20 pop-up events throughout Texas
- Emails to 10,000 state representatives, school districts, transit groups, and bicycle and pedestrian groups
- Meetings with SMTP Steering Committee, TxDOT districts, metropolitan transit authorities, transit operators, and the Public Transportation Advisory Committee

Public outreach included 600+ interactions at 20 pop-up events



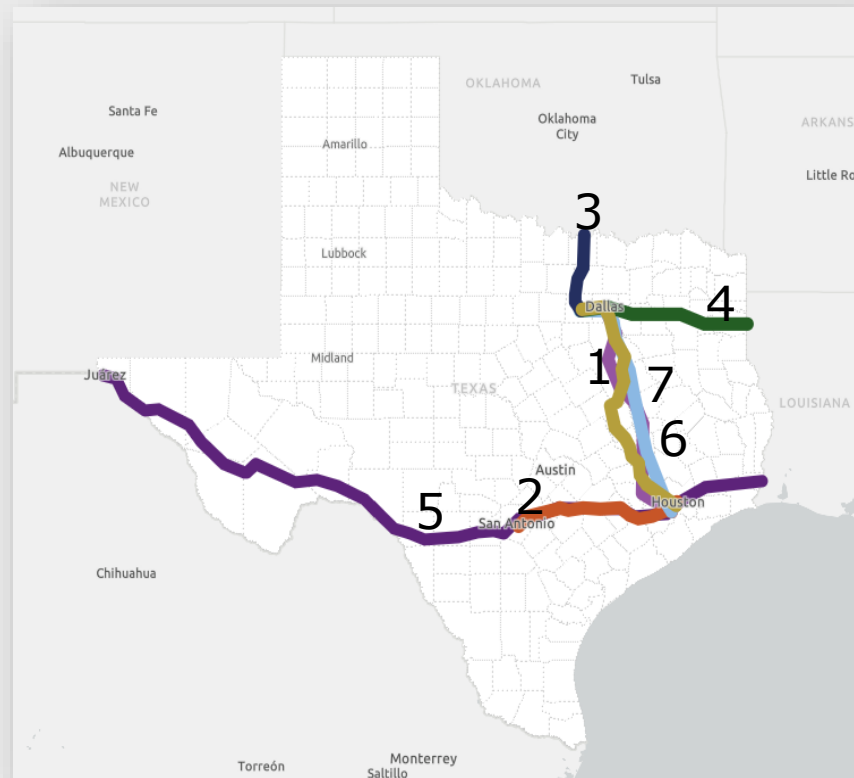


National: Proposed Network of Preferred Routes



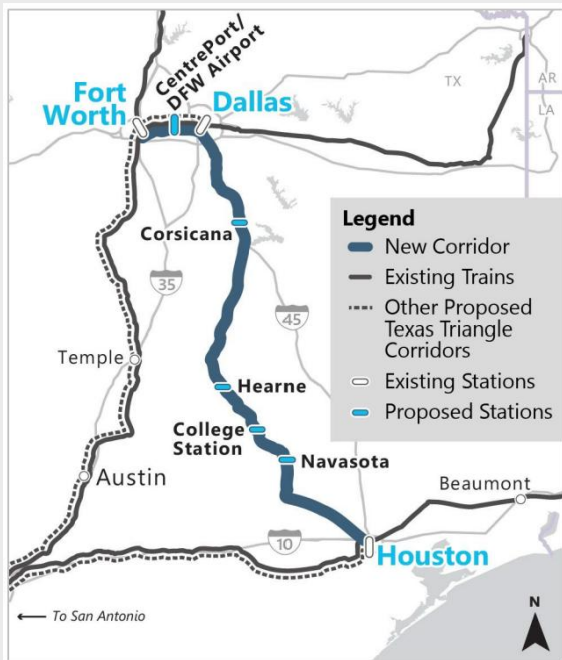
Current Passenger Rail Efforts in Texas: Corridor ID Awards

1. TxDOT, DFW to Houston
2. TxDOT, Houston to San Antonio
3. Kansas DOT, Heartland Flyer Extension
4. Southern Rail Commission, I-20 Corridor
5. Amtrak, Daily Sunset Limited
6. Amtrak, Texas HSR
7. NCTCOG, Fort Worth to Houston HSR



TxDOT Corridor Identification and Development Program

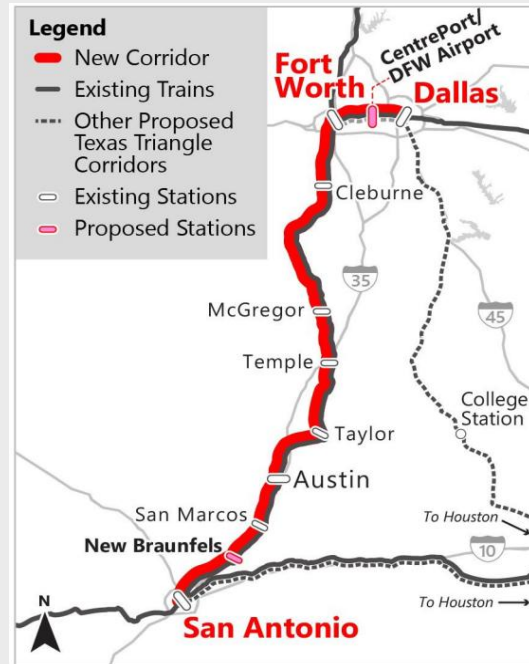
Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston



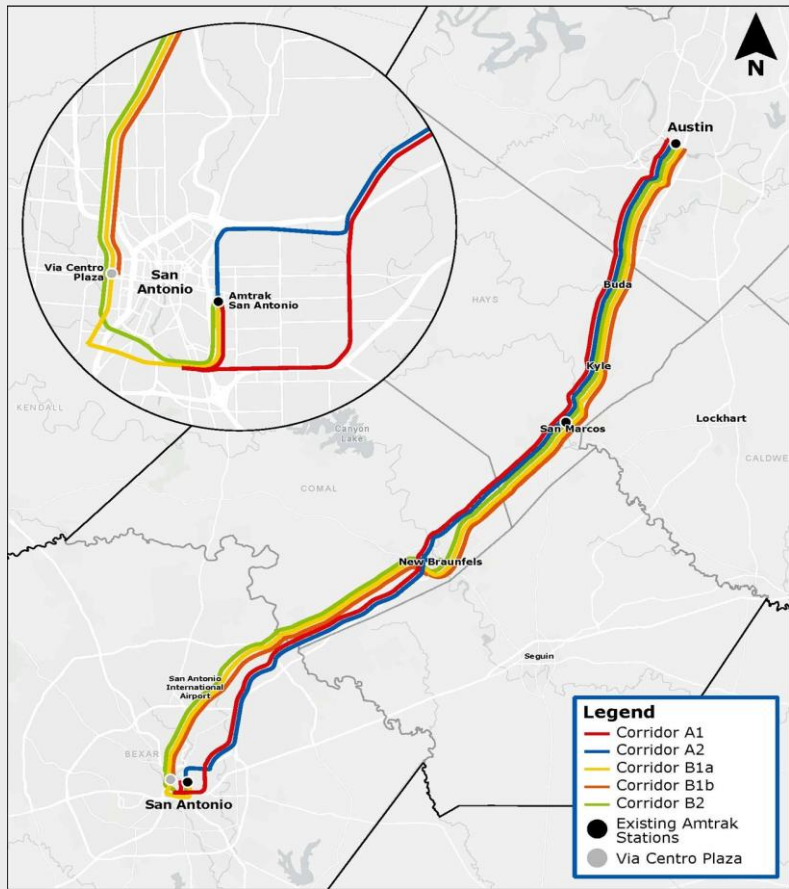
San Antonio to Houston



Dallas-Fort Worth to San Antonio



TxDOT Austin to San Antonio Passenger Rail Study



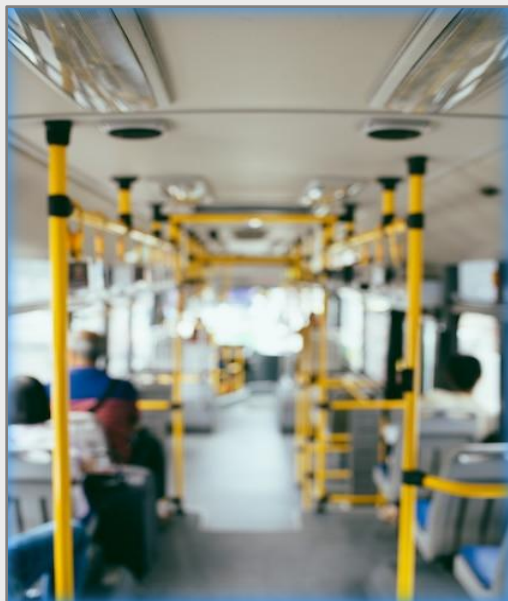
Study Components

- Rail Infrastructure Analysis
- Service Options Analysis
- Transportation Planning
- Rail Infrastructure Project Development

Timeline

- Operational Analysis: Early October 2025
- Conceptual Engineering: October to December 2025
- Travel Demand/Ridership: December 2025
- Formal Study Report: March 2026

Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan



First Texas Statewide Long-Range Transit Plan



A Plan for Texas

- Current and future transit needs, challenges, and opportunities
- Strategies to support public transit
- Framework for prioritizing transit investments



Stakeholder-driven and collaborative approach

- Comprehensive outreach and engagement strategy
- Builds upon existing local, regional, and statewide plans
- Steering Committee and Working Groups

Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan (SMTP)

- Includes transit, intercity bus, passenger rail service, ferries
- Final Draft: Public Outreach Fall 2025
- Plan Goals aligned with Connecting Texas 2050 (SLRTP)
- Four key elements:
 - Urban and Rural Area Transit Services
 - Intercity and Regional Connectivity
 - Planning and Design
 - Funding: Maintaining Existing Service and Expanding Service



What We Heard During Texas SMTP 2050 Engagement

- Intercity transit is a critical need in the Texas Triangle.
- Limited passenger rail was a top challenge to address according to the Texans we engaged during fall 2024 *Texas SMTP 2050* outreach.

SMTP Category

Draft Strategies

Needs, Gaps, Challenges

1

Urban and Rural Area Transit Services

- ✓ Identify priority corridors and minimum levels of service
- ✓ Integrate all transit modes with other transportation modes
- ✓ Establish institutional and organizational partnerships to promote comprehensive workforce development

- Growing urban areas
- Transit access to economic opportunities
- Congestion
- Rural and small urban area mobility networks
- Workforce recruitment, training, and retention

2

Intercity/Regional Connectivity

- ✓ Identify a statewide route and hub network
- ✓ Develop a governance framework for statewide and regional intercity services
- ✓ Implement technology to enable seamless travel statewide

- Statewide transit service network and connectivity
- Intercity connectivity
- Governance

3

Planning and Design

- ✓ Research statewide transit benefits
- ✓ Integrate transit through local, regional, and statewide planning
- ✓ Incorporate transportation technology
- ✓ Prioritize safety and resiliency
- ✓ Enhance research, reporting, and knowledge sharing

- Transit and the transportation planning and design process
- Transit resilience
- Public awareness of the importance of transit
- Inconsistent consideration of transit in economic development
- Aligning transit with development and transit-supportive land uses

4

Funding: Expand and Maintain Services

- ✓ Maximize use of existing funding
- ✓ Expand sources, flexibility, and levels of funding
- ✓ Tie funding to growth

- Funding for new and improved service
- Maintaining critical assets
- Need to expand and maintain service levels
- Funding challenges and constraints

SMTP Initial Implementation Steps

Building on the initial strategies and implementation actions, priority steps are identified to jumpstart the process and build a strong foundation for realizing Texas SMTP 2050.



1. Establish a Community of Practice (COP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges.

(TxDOT-facilitated)



2. Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan.

(TxDOT-led)



3. Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines.

(TxDOT-facilitated)



4. Develop success metrics, enhance and broaden data collection, and develop consistent reporting.

(TxDOT-facilitated)



5. Identify options to increase flexibility of funding sources and identify new and innovative funding sources to expand and maintain transit.

(TxDOT-supported)



6. Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on benefits of transit.

(TxDOT-led and supported)

Development of a Statewide Transit Network and Hub Plan

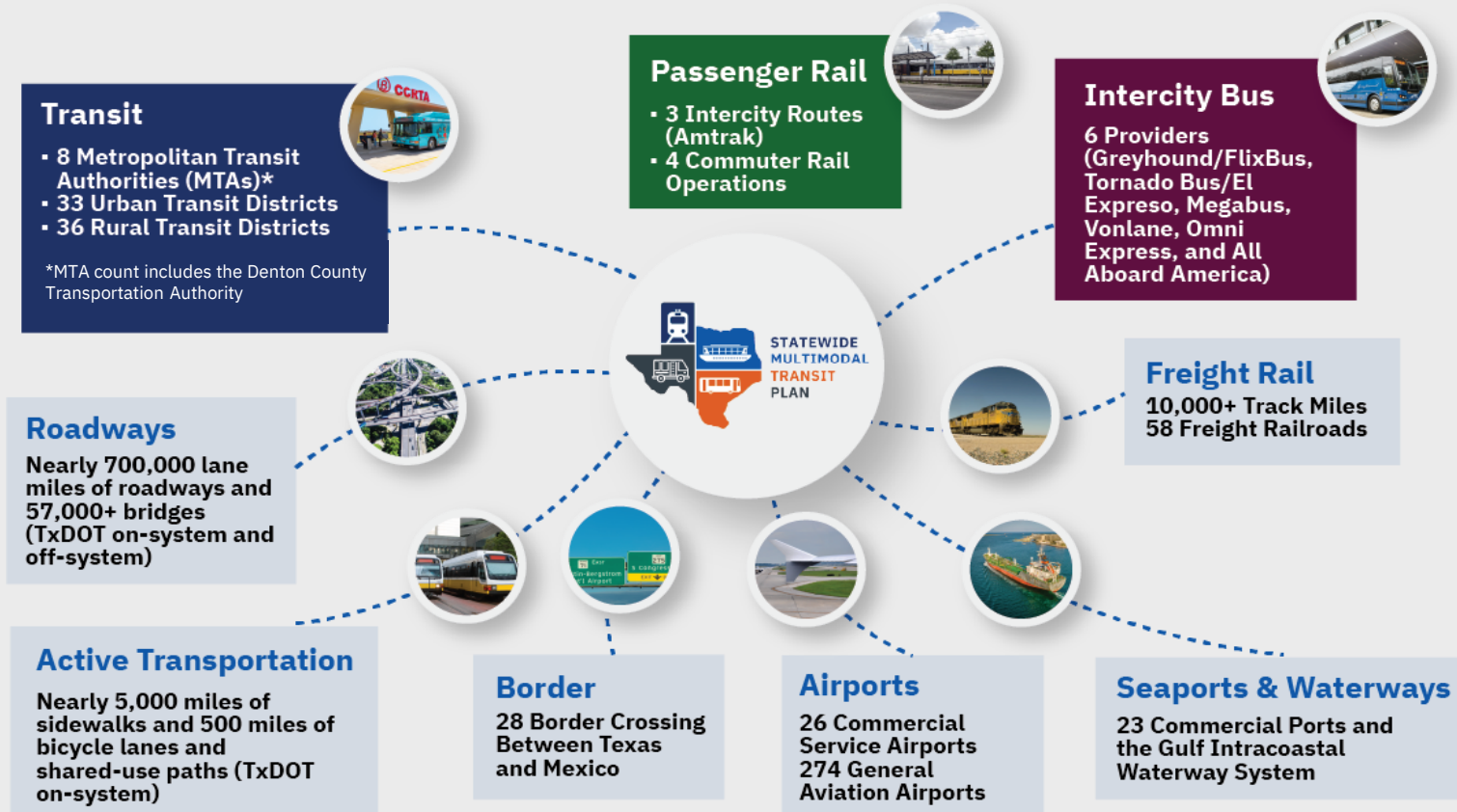
- Provide a framework for improved mobility and connectivity that provides Texans with an accessible and seamless way to travel across Texas without a car.
- Identify key corridors to connect priority transit destinations statewide.
- Identify hub locations providing local, regional, and first- and last-mile connections.
- Identify priority corridors within each region where transit treatments to improve safety, speed, and reliability should be considered in the planning, design, and construction processes.



TxDOT's Role in Passenger Rail

- Support existing state supported route (Heartland Flyer), maximizing the investment by supporting Amtrak marketing and capital improvement efforts.
- Participation in SAIPRC to improve all DOT processes concerning state supported Amtrak services.
- Improve safety of grade crossings on passenger rail networks.
- Regulate safety of track conditions, operations, equipment, and signals.
- Coordinate planning and report on possible outcomes of private projects (state law), includes consideration of using state highway ROW.
- Funding limited by state constitution and current transportation code.
- State Rail Plan updates, per FRA guidance, often supports public and private federal grant profiles.
- International coordination with state and federal partners in Mexico, and with CBP and FRA, to plan to meet growing demand of cross-border passenger service.

Texas' Integrated Multimodal Transportation System



Thank you!

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